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SECTION SIXTY-ONE

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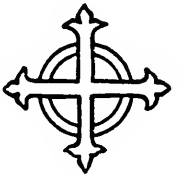
SELECTIONS FROM

LETTERS OF HENRY S. KINGMAN

MEMBER S. S. A. U. 61

NORTON HARJES AMBULANCE CORPS

MAY TO OCTOBER, 1917



MINNEAPOLIS
1917

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FROM THE LOG

STEAMER ESPAGNE, *May 12, 1917.*

Saturday afternoon.

Today is one of those beautiful clear days with a good sea running, while there is plenty of excitement. You see we are closing in on the war zone and things are getting tense. Yesterday afternoon, three or four ships were on the horizon and that gives much opportunity for speculation and exercise of the imagination. We crowd the rails and wonder what the ships are while no doubt the Captain has determined their character long before we've even seen them. We fly no flags, our name is not on the ship—no mark of identification. Three hundred miles more and we shall be in the war zone and from there in, across the Bay of Biscay, it will be exciting. Today there is to be a lifeboat drill and the lifeboats are the chief object of interest. They are fourteen strong and all swing out ready for use—while we show up at 3 o'clock with life-belts ready for a drill whatever it may be.

I hope by Tuesday you will be having a cable from us of our arrival and your longest period of waiting for news will be over. But

keep in mind all the time there's no room for worry in these days.

The Minnesota contingent have a table together. Howard Coan arranged for it and it makes it very pleasant.

Here's a boat load of love and again I'm very grateful for all you did before leaving and the kind of "bon voyage" you put behind me.

Write family news, Minnesota and United States. Tell me about the camp at Fort Snelling—who got in—about the new car and the lake house and is Gold Medal still on the market? Affectionately, HENRY.

PARIS

Wednesday, May 23.

Dear Father: I haven't told you that somehow we got to Paris. We were herded from the boat at Bordeaux to a station – a two-hour wait while we got breakfast and had a roam about the streets where evidences of war's havoc were more evident than they are in Paris. I mean the sombreness in people's faces – the women in black – the wounded, etc. Our baggage was bunched and we didn't see anything more of it until we picked it out of a mess of stuff here in Paris.

Then somehow we reached Paris, arriving without incident late Tuesday night, after a dusty, hot, rapid 350 mile journey across France in one of those hard third-class compartments with nothing but remnants of suitcase chocolate and fruit to eat all day. But we had a good time – Hollis, Wagner, Barton, and his architectural friend, Sanford, and an artist, Andrews, as companions in the compartment – all boys of the Corps.

France looked prosperous from Bordeaux to Paris, to say nothing of its beauty, coming through those old cities of Poitiers, Tours,

Angoulême – rich in feudal lore and wonderful old chateaux. Barton and his friend supplied the architectural background, Hollis supplied the history, Andrews saw the beauty of the ancient life, Fritz produced maps and guides, and I enjoyed it all.

There was such an abundance of well tilled and prosperous fields. You see everyone is working, the old and young, the women – they've taken the place of the men. There are no idlers, and that's true of the city as well as the country, and that's why France keeps up her contribution in material necessities and the ways of life. I can't tell how beautiful that ride was, with its dense vegetation, beautiful flowers, fruit and chestnut trees in bloom, the quaint old stone tile-roofed houses with their gardens and wistaria cornices, while the background came in with Lombardy poplars galore with *le gui* (mistletoe) hanging in them like huge nests.

But then, the people along the way! That tells a different story – women in black – wounded by hundreds – arms in slings and men on crutches – bandaged heads – men in uniform by the hundred – women in so many different phases of life where you wouldn't expect to see them – a sombre face everywhere. They've lost so much in men – that's where France is hurt. It's men they need and there's scarcely a man between eighteen and forty-five that isn't in uniform.

We saw German prisoners working on the

railroads en route, young blonde haired boys, in shabby dress of well battered uniforms – boys of sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen – a hopeless looking crowd, but well taken care of. A prison camp we saw – new buildings – clean and in the country where they must have good quarters.

We're in Paris now and here you have to go a little farther behind to see the hard results. Paris must always be beautiful and busy and it's more the military in its glorious side that must appear. All the possible gayety in France must be centered here but it isn't much.

I don't believe we'll see the front for two months but there's no telling. A training camp would be sensible with work on driving, repairing, and other things.

We've done considerable sightseeing, have met a good many Minnesota people and spent a good deal of our time getting signed up at the office and uniforms fitted, etc.

How's the U. S. crop coming? See Teddy can't come over – French wanted him to – they want Americans here for any purpose whatever but Wilson looks to me to be handling a mighty sane program. Love. HENRY.

Wednesday, May 23, 1917.

Dear Father and Mother: It's a starlit Parisian night and the crowds swarm on the Boulevard Capucines a block away. It's the first real day for weather that we've had, clear and warm, a relief from the uncertainty of rain

every little while with a cold damp atmosphere followed the next hour with sweltering heat made worse by the humid air.

It's now nine-thirty. The crowd will soon be leaving the cafés, will saunter in a half-lit city on the principal thoroughfares and then dwindle to a rush of taxis with their monotonous honks which seem old-fashioned after our shrieks of Klaxons at home. Then it will be quiet all over the city—dark, deserted, and desolate, with few lights on the main streets and the side streets entirely in darkness. Oh! it's a quiet Paris at night and then you feel more of the workings of war.

But here I write in complete comfort in a room with two comfortable double beds, running water, a pipe, and warm. It will take more than this to make me realize the war.

We've been here a week and a day. I don't know what we've really done only it seems an awful lot and we haven't done much loafing. For instance, today meeting Sam Sewall at ten o'clock, we took the tram to Versailles, arriving at noon. We'd planned on bicycles but the price and condition of roads reduced us to tram. My remembrance of Versailles was of a long, hot, dusty journey with a great display of palaces and beautiful gardens with sister being photographed underneath a huge marble lion. It's different. Today I saw it merely from a landscape and beauty point of view. It was a wonderful outing and we walked miles thru perfectly wonderful May woods and gar-

dens, cutting out any attempt to see the inside of the palaces and making it a strictly out-of-door affair – guides and guide books strictly out of our line.

We had our lunch in a white-tabled grove along the canal, an excellent meal, then a three-hour walk in those wonderful paths and groves. It's the most beautiful time of year – foliage is dense – flowers at their height and in such profusion – lilacs – enormous trees – wistaria – chestnuts everywhere in full bloom – honeysuckle – rhododendrons – magnolias – and lots of new ones – it's too beautiful. I never saw anything like it and all of France that I have seen has this same cloak of flowers. Versailles is the most wonderful bit of formal landscape gardening I ever hope to see and the grottos, walks, and planting around the Trianons are sublime. That's enough of today. I only hope I'll hear from you soon and wonder when. What is going on at home and in the States? News is meagre and you know in French. I see that the Sunday editions in the States are to be limited to thirty-six pages. Shocking! Here four sheets is absolutely the limit.

Much love to you all. HENRY.

Saturday, May 26, 1917.

It's Saturday afternoon, and my old afternoon off, so here's a little chat with you after luncheon.

Just at present I'm confined to my room with a severe case – quarantined. Oh, merely

on account of conventional modesty. But you see the English tailor who is making our uniforms doesn't know much about speed, and so I am forced to put up with an old suit, and am patiently waiting for the tailor to put a few creases in it, so that I can look regal for the opera tonight. Sam, Fritz, and myself are going to Thais, seven francs for seats in the orchestra – pretty fine – and no full dress allowed in Paris. Tomorrow night we are seeing Aida, from the gallery, with Hollis Cross, so we'll get some good music.

And then we are also taking tea, Sunday afternoon, with Mrs. Herrick to whom Mr. Gale gave me a letter of introduction. I went up and called on her Thursday afternoon. She told me many interesting things about her work at the "canteens" where the traveling soldiers are fed, and about the war and things of a general nature. She has an apartment on Rue Raynaud with a beautiful view of Paris, high above the city, overlooking the Seine. I've also inquired for Mr. Bartlett, with Mrs. Gerould's card, but no luck, as he is seldom there.

Latest reports, after a talk with Mr. Havemeyer this morning, in which we asked for some definite guarantee of the situation, show that we will be sent to a training camp next week.

I hear that another boat comes in Tuesday or Wednesday with forty more men for our corps – and then *they'll* have some waiting.

But all I look for on this boat is some word from home – it's been too long.

Good-bye, and love. HENRY.

Monday, May 28, 1917.

Paris at war presents a bewildering spectacle. You turn from gay frivolity on one side to the grim aspect of it on another. As I've said before, here must be all the gayety of France – for there is some.

Last night the opera house was filled to hear Aida – a quiet and modest crowd, of course. The expensive cafés are full, shops are well patronized – there's so much evidence of money being spent that seems needless, but I think the foreigners do much of it. Boulevards are crowded with people. The sidewalk cafés are packed every evening, and outside of uniforms, it's hard to realize what must be taking place not far away.

The women are taking a big place in this war, and you see them everywhere in civil life taking hold of the men's jobs and doing them well. All street cars and subways are run by young girls. They are in the shops, selling newspapers, waitresses, in the banks, a few driving taxis; in fact, there must be few idle. And in another way they are not doing what they might – for they quite spoil the poilu, I think. It's splendid to see the affection and interest and care they give him, but they carry it too far and they give too much; he has everything, and it spoils him. But, poor men,

they've been through an awful lot, and it's a wonder they still hold out, isn't it?

I think the Germans, if they were to see Paris, would give up immediately if they thought or had any idea that they were breaking the spirit of the French, or that they could starve them.

Tonight Sam, Fritz, Coan, and I dine together over near the Latin Quarter. We sauntered through there the other evening. What an interesting place! And we found, tucked away in a back alley, an old church, dating from Roman times. It's within two blocks of Notre Dame, on the other side of the river, but one would never know of its existence.

We have a library now, consisting of about forty books. It has a wide scope, running from Thais in French to U. S. A. Field Service Regulations, Testaments, numerous French dictionaries, war books, and quite an array of poetry. We've just purchased Alan Seeger's poems and Robert Service's "Rhymes of a Red Cross Man." I enjoy them immensely, and there are some very splendid things. There's one in particular of Seeger's, "A Message to America," which painted perhaps a very true story before the war declaration, but I hope now we stand clear. Service has a very fine sonnet on "Faith."

The French is coming slowly, though it's a hit-or-miss shot at a lot of small phrases, and conversation is still quite out of the question. I keep finding myself craving to talk with these

people and get at something more than mere observation.

With ever so much love and an ardent hope that everything goes well. HENRY.

SANDRICOURT

June 2–Saturday.

Would that you could see the calm and peace of the setting from which this pen writes. You would wonder that there can exist what we all know–and only too well. In my immediate vicinity, to begin with, a large stake supports my back, while a verdant growth of grass and moss makes me comfortable with this little pad. There are flowers in profusion, daisies, large and small, buttercups, blue columbines and innumerable species of the wild vetch, while strawberry blossoms promise something later.

This is all on top of a high plateau in a meadow with trees all about, except for a beautiful vista directly in front, where a truly magnificent French landscape opens up and extends for miles and miles–varying shades of green with deep woods, undulating fields, and the brown clay open ones, while light green shows the coming of early crops. Long, curving, white roads, little white villages with their red tiled roofs, lone poplars, many men and women in the fields, while just back of me a man is swearing at a two-teamed plow of

oxen—big, white brutes. Fritz is writing, propped up behind another tree not far away. Nothing but a beautiful, quiet country to look upon, and one wonders how they can be tearing and disfiguring this same land not so far away.

Now you have my settings, and no doubt you want to hear where I am, why we came here, what we've done, and the prospects.

After drifting about in Paris and living in what seemed to me luxury, for war days, Thursday afternoon we were given notice that we would leave Paris the following morning at 6:30 for our training camp. So it was a wild rush for money, last errands, and packing. Before that, since writing you, our days in Paris had been much the same—with perhaps shopping the most predominant feature of the day. We landed at headquarters at 6 A. M., after a rush for a taxi at that hour in the morning, and, fifty strong, we went through the gentle process of "herdation" again. An hour's ride from Paris brought us to the town of Meru, almost due north—you can find it on the map. From there south, the road leads through beautiful cultivated hills to the village of Sandricourt, and then a mile to a little group of buildings where there is now established *Depot Voluntaires Americains.*

We marched, four abreast, from Meru to our barracks, and there must have been a few blisters in the crowd before we finally arrived.

A few words about the headquarters. My

feeble pen cannot do justice to a description of these places so you'll have to use some imagination to fill in. But you know the French farm house, built on a quadrangle of plaster houses, with two-foot walls and red tiled roofs. This is a most picturesque one, lying at the foot of a hill, with woods and fields all about. The buildings themselves are the buildings to a chateau owned by Mr. Goelet, who has contributed so liberally to the Norton Harjes Corps. It's an estate of some ten thousand acres, a wonderful piece of property with woods, fields, pastures, meadows, streams, and ponds, while there is a quantity of game about. The chateau itself lies some two miles away.

Upon our arrival we had our luggage, the buildings, and a supply of food—so we set to work to put things in order, and the making of a camp will be our task for the next two weeks. Captain Jacobson has direct charge of the boys in camp. There is a sort of a dual monarchy at the head, an English colonel and a French lieutenant whose supervision is direct from military authorities—both splendid men who have seen considerable service and perfect gentlemen.

I don't know of anything better for one than this life, and I'm particularly delighted with this chance to get hardened up and in such a beautiful country. There are regular duties each day placed on the order card the preceding evening, such as milk details, water orderlies, supply details, and table orderlies. Each

room has its captain or chief, and one man takes care of the room each day. It's very much like any military camp with not quite so much work to do and not so much discipline, though the latter is strict and to the letter.

Captain Jacobson has a great ability to handle men without making them feel that he is using his position, but rather that we're all together and having a good time of it. Then Colonel White, the British officer, a short, white-haired man, with a monocle and a neat uniform, lives at the chateau and pays us a visit every morning and afternoon. He's seen service in the Dardanelles and comes here on a relief job. The lieutenant is the military man from the French government, speaks English very well, and handles the boys in good shape.

The boys themselves are gradually getting together. Heretofore, we've been hitting on our selective ways, pretty much in groups, but thrown together, and thawing off a little cynical attitude toward our comrades, we're seeing something more in each other. It's quite marvelous, for if ever there was a heterogeneous composition, we are that—men varying in age from seventeen to thirty, some immature college boys, others older, business men, artists, architects, automobile men, vaudeville performers, English gentlemen—an impossible bunch to start with. But we're picking up and I hope we all go to the front together.

The camp will be a permanent summer af-

fair with men being sent here after a few days in Paris, and then being selected and sent to the front as soon as the sections are equipped. We can't tell anything about the length of time we'll be here, except that we are the next crowd to go out, and it won't be more than a month.

I'm glad we're the first bunch here. It's rather fun, making camp, and we'll have more to keep us busy. The walks about here are wonderful, with the woods and open pastures and the little French villages. Am wondering if you are at the lake, and hope everything is going well. Love. HENRY.

Monday, June 5, 1917.

Ma chere Famille: Back in my orchard again, with the first shadows of the evening beginning to fall. This and the early morning are the best part of the day, and to see this—it's not exactly what we think of Europe, is it? I think all the birds that were at the front have taken up their abode here, quantities of them, with notes much the same as ours, but just enough difference to spoil the name. It's the same with the flowers, too. I can recognize species, but they are a little different, and trees do the same trick. A pretty sight is the corn flower, hundreds of deep, blue ones, while orchids, fleur de lys, buttercups, forget-me-nots, and daisies carpet the fields and woods. Soon the old moon will make this a paradise; and then there are the new night noises—cuckoos call back and forth—owls do their

hooting, and the turtle-doves add a soft note. Why should there be anything that can raise havoc with such beauty as this! And my mission turns itself into a vacation, I'm so in love with this country.

You know what a treat it was to hear from you, each and every one; and the news from clippings was particularly interesting, too—a good selection. Am very glad to hear that Lester made the camp, though I wish that he or Gerald were with me here. Lester would adore this present life, but then it's merely one way of doing the work ahead, and he may be even bossing me as a private in six months,—who knows?

Oh! we had spaghet' tonight (no wonder it's a fine evening) cooked in wonderful stringy Gruyére cheese, and I found two men that didn't care much for it. What a feast!

It's a good mile walk to Sandricourt in one direction, and Courcelle in another. Both have shops, and Fritz and I made a raid there Saturday. Two tins of jam, a Camembert cheese, four cakes of chocolate, cigarettes and matches, were the prizes—all for eight francs; and that's the extent of trading since we arrived. The chocolate—punk, but good enough for these days. About the only sugar we get is a coarse rock stuff.

You'll think about the only things we think of are eating, sleeping, smoking—well, it does occupy considerable of our time—but there's a good deal that won't get by the lines.

You'll wonder about some things – and they won't be answered – partly because of negligence perhaps, and we'll have to lay the rest on the war.

There are many people that I want to write, but I don't know where the time is coming from.

Regards to every one at home, and a great deal of love to all the dear ones. HENRY.

Sandricourt, June 13, 1917.

Dear Mother: In my favorite spot in the orchard again, only it's a dark, drear day, with a cold wind at my back, and I'm fearful of rain at any moment, and also, that my washing won't get the drying that it must have. You should have seen me yesterday morning, by myself, at the old dilapidated community washing fountain, with a board at forty-five degrees alongside the little pool, pounding, scrubbing, rinsing, and squeezing clothes; a dirty lot of water, too, with little green lizards and pollywogs for company. And the roof over the outfit – it must have been thatched in the Dark Ages, for surely it was more holes than whole.

But the camp is very different from my last writing. We now have one hundred sixty men or more. Men are coming and going nearly every day, though the influx quite overshadows the outgoers. Six men have gone to join old sections, while ten left Monday, of an original group, to drive some cars out to the

front for an old section, and bring others in.

Of course, to get out into the field is the one objective. Our bunch that came originally ought to go first, and soon. They've all been in France from a month to six weeks, put in many hard licks at getting this camp in order, and are surely entitled to the first call. But we wait patiently. I'd like to feel that I am doing something; this living on absolute charity is too much.

Fritz and I have moved to another room, Room A, by far the best in the barracks, and with Wagner and Cross and several others whom we liked very much.

Mr. Jacobson left for the front last Saturday, leaving the camp in charge of Barton, first in command, and his friend Sanford for an assistant. They are to run it for a month.

I think there must be at least thirty-five Minnesota men; fine fellows, too; while there are six of us who saw a good deal of each other at the Chamber of Commerce – Fritz Wheeler, Stair, Lawrence Gregory, George Reed, Charlie McCarthy, and myself.

There goes the dinner call for first mess, and I must be off. More later. With ever so much love.

HENRY.

Sandricourt, June 15, 1917.

Dear Mother: Today has been review day again with all the celebrities from Paris paying us a call. This time they brought two men who were the object of our interest and

admiration—men who came over with Pershing's staff, one a Major Murphy from the U. S. army, and the other a major in the Red Cross. We went through our drill and had inspection, while a new flag pole with the American flag unfurled made me feel more of the States' power. A Red Cross flag hangs below it. The boys are whitewashing all the buildings, inside and out.

The drill feature occupies about two hours a day; three companies equally divided; mine, Company "A," with Captain Sparks at the head. He's from St. Louis, and a room companion.

A large item arrived today in the shape of uniforms, and we are gently caressing them and admiring each other. They are a dark khaki, with large square outside pockets; big brass Red Cross buttons, leather puttees, and a stylish heavy lined overcoat which at present looks like an awful burden; but we will be glad of it later.

Today I'm the head of the "kitchen detail," which means nothing less than "head waiter." It's quite a little job, though; nine men under me for two services, and you know there is nothing the men will kick at more than their meals. But I've escaped, at breakfast and lunch.

Fritz and I had a good walk yesterday afternoon. While en route we stopped at a farm house for eggs and got into one of those half word and half hands and feet conversations

with a Frenchman. He was home for eight days' permission, after three years at the front; had had both feet frozen solid, two bullet wounds, asphyxiation, and I don't know what all. Just then he was taking his dog and going off for a hunt in the woods.

Mr. Norton and his party brought out the mail this morning, which included your fine letter of May 26th. What a fine turnout for the Liberty Loan there was in Minneapolis.

I can't think of anything that I want, unless it's cigarettes and tobacco. I believe that has to be sent thru the War Department. An occasional book would be powerfully welcome, something that I could read and throw away, as I can't load up my equipment much more.

The boys just coming from Paris announce the arrival there of many American soldiers. It must be great.

They tell us that the list for the next section to go out will be posted this afternoon. I surely hope Fritz and I will be included. It seems that the only possible way to be fair is to let the old men go out first.

Hollis had a *Journal* of May 27th arrive yesterday, latest news from home, and we devoured it eagerly.

It's time that I was sweeping and straightening up the room. That's one of my tasks for today. In polite military terms, I am the "room orderly," but I should call it "chamber maid."

Much love to you all. HENRY.

Sandricourt, June 22, 1917.

My dear Father and Mother: After a month of beautiful weather we're taking a dose of two days' rain, showers, clouded skies and cold. The camp runs with a slimy oozing mud—but rubber boots and slickers keep one comfortable. Two nights ago a violent thunder storm raised havoc with the poor lads in the barns and tents, while one tent blew down and all but floated away. But there's little complaint on any side, which is quite remarkable, as three weeks in one place with continued disappointments as to our going wears on one's nerves.

Two sections have been made up since I last wrote. Section Sixty-one includes all the old men here with about a dozen of the newer arrivals—George Reed and Tut Stair also being in the list. Our section commander is to be a Mr. Bullard who's had a year's experience at the front. He gave us a talk Sunday last and appears to be a thoroughly fine fellow. We are to have a French section—it being a section held in reserve by the French government to replace any section which has run out of cars. There are to be twenty new Fiat cars I understand and about five staff cars for transport, officers, etc. The cars are supposed to be at Dijon and to be ready at any time, which is getting to be an old story, of course. Whether we will pick them up at Dijon or be met with them in Paris, no one seems to know.

It's been an interesting week outside of the

routine life. The boys have begun contributing to French production—which is a very sane proposition. Harvesting has begun with hay the initial crop, but it will soon be followed by the other grains. About twenty men go from camp each day to nearby farms where they stack and pitch hay from seven A.M. to five P.M. I had my turn at it Monday—but saved a sore back by the fact that an early morning rain made the hay too wet. Result was the six of us spent a very pleasant half holiday. After a round of milk at the farm house, we hunted out a guide to show us thru a chateau that lay close by, not a very large estate but extremely rare in its trees and woods with a stream running close by the chateau itself. The grounds were in very good condition considering no one was living there this summer. The formal flower gardens looked beautiful with their plan and straight edges but upon closer examination the vegetation in them proved to be potatoes and *haricots verts*, which shows the extent of intensive cultivation. The man opened the chateau for us and showed it from cellar to garret. Of course, it was not in perfect condition—all the real valuables had been removed—but with an hour or two of preliminaries it could have been made very habitable. These chateaux in exterior are all very similar, large white four-cornered affairs, extremely plain, but here we had opportunity to see the interior furnishings with their beautiful pan-

eled walls, dark oak, hand carved, while tapestried walls in the bedrooms made a similar effect to our own wall-papered ones. But what surprised me was the real hominess of the outfit. I had always imagined them so cold—but no doubt the rugs and furniture softened the various rooms. The blankets were even on some of the beds—the latter beautiful four-posters each set off in a little niche back of the main room—while a small staircase, usually spiral, always led to a small chamber above the room for the valet or *femme de chamber.*

But we've broken into more than vacant chateau life. Fritz and Libby discovered a treat and included me on their second visit. In the course of their walk one afternoon they came to these chateau grounds—two miles from here—rang a huge bell to see what would happen and were given entrance. They understood the gateman to say that it was an old ladies' home but it developed to be more than that. So yesterday the three of us went. At this chateau lives Madame Dupret and her twenty-year-old son. The latter speaks a little English while his mother speaks understandable French. It was truly delightful there—sitting in a French parlor—with all the glory of a habitable chateau—the books and pictures—flowers galore about the room—high white paneled walls. There were two ladies calling upon Madame so our attentions were entirely confined to the young man. But Madame

overlooked nothing in the way of serving delicious tea which was made more so by the addition of a flavor of rum. Cakes and cigarettes were also served and they couldn't do enough for us. We talked of the war, French, English, and American customs, and closed the call with a beautiful walk thru their gardens. The boy is home for a month, having been wounded in the side and is now convalescent. He's a second lieutenant in the Alpine Chasseurs—the highest type of infantry service in the French army; his mother a delightful woman and most hospitable. They begged us to come again and the boy walked some distance with us on the way home. I think we shall make several calls if we remain here long. I think it must be a joy for the boy and his mother to have someone for company. The father died several years ago.

Besides this break into French society I attended a wedding a week ago; a young couple invited all those who wanted to come. The farm where we went lies a mile up over the hill and we poured in there fifty strong shortly after supper. After a wait, the couple and bridal party showed up, and here in this French farm-yard we were a merry party. Andrews contributed his accordion for the music, and the boys danced with the three girls in the bridal party, while the bride and groom looked on wreathed in smiles. We took up a hat collection of about forty francs for a wedding present, and the beauty of it was that

the groom thought it for the music and wanted to contribute. Then they served a litre of white wine all around and we drank to the "little *poilu*." Cakes were produced and everyone had a good time. The groom in his blue uniform made a splendid figure, while the bride was a true French dairy-maid.

That concludes the big events of the week—barring the best, which is always the arrival of mail; and the gods were good to me with at least a dozen letters most of them from you. More later with much love to you all. Ever affectionately, HENRY.

TO THE FRONT

Thursday, June 28, 1917.

Dear Mother and Father: Another week finds us en route—whither I do not know, but we have the satisfaction of at last being on the move.

You remember Dijon, though perhaps it is more familiar to myself, for it was here that we spent the night three years ago, during the early days of the war. I remember spending that night in a vain attempt to locate a comfortable place to sleep. Dave and Fritz found the park benches rather hard and finally curled up in the window-sill of a hotel, while Douglas and myself after much wandering finally took refuge on the tables of the station café. It's somewhat better quarters, I can say, this time.

But I'll give you the line of march and personnel. Sunday afternoon at Sandricourt came the word that Section Sixty-one would leave on the early train Monday morning—and for once it was not a rumor. I must say that it was not with any real regret that we pulled out of the camp forty-five strong marching in our military form to the station,

and we were off for an hour's ride to Paris. Section Sixty-one consists of thirty-five men who were in the original bunch that went to Sandricourt—with ten men who had come afterwards. The latter included George Reed and Tut Stair and Grant Willard. Hollis and George Wagner are of course with us, and also Ahlers and Smith of Minnesota. So you see we have a good representation. But it's a fine crowd of men; we work together in splendid style, and we're going to throughout, I'm sure.

I can now appreciate why Paris has its festive appearance. After you have been on army rations and in a military camp for three weeks and a half, you go to Paris with a light heart and ready to eat and laugh. And what it must be for the men who have been at the front for a year or more! We had little time in Paris—having first a delicious meal, from *hors d'oeuvre* to strawberries, and then were busy at the bank, a little shopping, a call at the office, 7 Rue François, where we saw Henry Hill for a few minutes—and at five we were at the station ready for the trip south to Dijon.

And what a trip it was—it was bad enough three years ago. It then took about three hours, but this time all night.

We hit Dijon at 6:30 and had our bread and coffee in that identical station café. Then in three camions we went to our quarters. Before the war it was the Dijon Athletic Club—

at present the most tumble down old plaster building you can imagine. The roof was about to cave in, the plaster all over the floors, and straw everywhere, where previous soldiers had slept. There we set up our little canvas cots and made ourselves as comfortable as possible—which was not comfortable. We eat at large barracks with a couple of hundred *poilus* near the automobile park. The food is about the same as Sandricourt—potatoes, meat, bread, rice—but our officers have a little extra money from the Red Cross and buy us cheese, sardines, and beer as extras. I can't get used to the French army wine, but at the front it's the only thing we'll get to drink. I've told you that we are a section of the French army, *No. 61 Sanitaire Section Americain*, and all our cars and equipment come directly from the French army.

Tuesday, our first day, we looked over the cars and then got a chance for some sleep in the afternoon. There are twenty new Fiat cars with two men on each. At present I'm with a young fellow by the name of Tommie Fast. The cars are in fine condition with splendid equipment and excellent ambulance bodies. Yesterday we were at work from seven until five getting checked up on equipment, supplies, oil, gas, etc. Today it's been more of that and each car has had a trial run.

Oh, yes, today we moved, coming from the club to this huge barn—it's much better too—

three enormous rooms—but it's clean as a whistle and much nearer the park.

I understand we leave tomorrow afternoon; no one knows where to, it's all under sealed orders of course.

I must go to dinner, and I haven't half covered the ground—but I'll hope to get another chance tomorrow. We hear nothing of the outside world and we probably won't get any mail for several days until we've reached a permanent camp.

If you want to send me something I should like a couple of those large bottles of Horlick's malted milk tablets. They're very nutritious, compact, and good. Send them separately and I might get one of them.

Love to all. HENRY.

July 6, 1917.

My dear Mother: We were having a first rate vacation at Dijon—it's a splendid city, so absolutely devoid of foreigners and so thoroughly French. Our days were spent for the most part working on the cars. About five we would go to the barracks for a nap or sometimes for a bath in the elegantly appointed Notre Dame Bains where you could have plenty of hot and cold water, towels, soap, and *time* for one franc. You know it was my first flirtation with a bathtub since I left New York, and I couldn't help letting the water run just for the sheer novelty of it.

Every evening at seven George Reed, Tut,

Fritz, and myself—hereafter it must be "the four" to abbreviate—would go for dinner at some café and I can still taste those dinners and wonder if we'll ever get any more like them. Then we'd shop or travel about the town and we were all fond of Dijon when we left. The people were particularly kind to us, especially a few English. At every café or park they would come and visit. There was also considerable opportunity to learn French. In fact I've learned enough French since leaving Sandricourt to convince me that it is not such an impossible language and I can at least get anything I'm after now and can carry on a very poor conversation. But it's good fun and an ideal amusement and gives one much to pass away the time with.

Sunday last was a rainy dreary day in Dijon and early that morning came the *ordre de movement.* That's the military order that puts us on our way. Until that arrives we know nothing—merely sit tight and twiddle our thumbs but always subdued by rumors which never materialize.

An *ordre de movement* commands the section to move to a certain place; that done, you wait until the next one comes, and so it will be all the rest of this life here. All day Sunday we were busy putting on the finishing touches, filling up with *essence* (gas) *et cetera* for the trip. We were not told until we actually started whither the destination.

Sunday night it was my turn (and misfor-

tune) to have the "dog watch" on the cars and consequently I had no sleep that night. But it was a short night and we were scheduled to pull out at five-thirty Monday morning so the boys showed up at about four. Precisely at five-forty-five we were on our way—the twenty ambulances, one camion, the officer's touring car. I told you we were forty-five in number, twenty drivers of ambulances, twenty assistants, two men on the camion and three extras, besides two cooks, three mechanics, and a general utility man, Shorty by name.

On a long trip as of the 2nd of July, we travel *en convoi.* The cars are about thirty yards apart with the officer's car leading and the camion with its mechanics bringing up the rear. At the sound of Bullard's whistle every driver holds his seat while the aide starts the car and then stands with his hand outstretched. If there are twenty hands out, two blasts start us on our way. If a car is out of it with engine trouble, tires, or whatever, the *convoi* goes on while the camion waits until it's ready and takes its place later on. Of course, there are as many as seven or more cars in the rear quite often, as those in good shape push right along and are picked up by the rear guard of delinquents.

My car, with Fast as aide, holds down Number Seven, and Number Seven blew a flat tire about an hour out of Dijon. But it wasn't much trouble, only an inner tube had ripped open, and we had another tire on in

exactly four minutes. As the *convoi* was resting at the time we didn't even lose our place.

It was a nasty morning, sometimes rain, nearly always a mist; but the moisture eliminated the frightful dust and the roads were in splendid shape the whole distance. That first run we covered about two hundred kilometres I should judge, and I'm happy to be where the road led us—no less than into the beautiful ———Mountains. I never dreamed that this is where we would do our work.

At noon that day we stopped in a little village for lunch and repairs. Lunch splendid —soup—omelette—bread—jam—potato salad—cheese—beer—*café au lait.* That doesn't sound as if we were starving, does it? But that's the best meal I've seen en route outside of our July 4th dinner.

That afternoon we were off again at one o'clock—the sun shining and a perfectly glorious ride, increasing in interest and beauty at every mile. About three I had the misfortune to fail to start my engine—some little thing wrong—and as a result got stuck in the rear guard for the rest of the trip, as several cars fell out and we were never able to pick up the leaders. But I had all the better time for it. We spent an hour at one time alongside an immense aviation field where there were literally hundreds of machines in the hangars and a few in the air.

The closer we came to our destination, of

course, the more were the evidences of war; that is, in troops and otherwise. But the wonderful country took the most of my attention. It's a replica of Switzerland – only you must cut out the high peaks – but the vegetation is the same, the fields and cows high on the mountain sides, the winding roads, pines, and valleys with the slaty green rivers, the little farm houses high above, the air intoxicating, hot in the day but cool at night, and always the threat of rain. The villages are much the same, though of course there's a lack of Swiss chalets, for thruout France it's all the red tile roof and plaster construction.

At Dijon we were outfitted with sheepskin lined top coats and I have a fairly heavy rain coat, sweater, three blankets, and a heavy winter overcoat which the Corps furnishes with our uniform.

It's nearly two weeks since we left Paris and in that time no news at all to speak of, no mail, no English papers, though I saw a French one this morning. About the only news it had was of the grand celebration in Paris on the 4th. It will surely be a treat to hear from you again and get in touch with the outside world.

Time goes very swiftly even during the days of waiting. I'm very happy since leaving Sandricourt because we've begun to get near a contribution. At least we have our cars to keep in order at present and then you know how much I love to be in the mountains.

Best of health all the time – my little watch keeps excellent time and I haven't broken my glasses yet and I think often of you all.

HENRY.

IN THE MOUNTAINS

July 7th.

My dear Father and Mother: It's boiling hot today with clear skies and no sign of rain and last night was one of those full moon nights when the moon filled this beautiful valley and cast huge shadows.

I haven't told you of our arrival here and our quarters in the village and it seems that my letters must be limited to such trivial things. As a matter of fact you have more news than we have.

The last part of the trip brought us up a steep valley—then one of those corkscrew roads to ascend and likewise for the descent, and we were at our destination. It didn't take me long to get to sleep that night after the long drive and no sleep the night before.

Here we live in true tramp style. There's no room for us in any sort of barracks, so we are left to our ambulances, which are very habitable houses if you can learn to live in the smallest possible way. It's possible to put up two cots on each side, bracing them against the rails that run thru the center for the stretchers, and then it's precisely like going to bed in an

upper berth of the smallest size. But I only tried that one night. In fact I could write a ten-volume book on methods of sleep. In the last seven nights I've had a different place every night. First, in the barracks in Dijon, one night on the front seat, one night here on the side seat, one night under the sky on my cot, the next in the upper berth affair, and now we four have regular quarters. You've heard of ten-cent beds perhaps. Did you ever hear of a five-cent room? That's us. After several inquiries we found a lady here who gave up her two rooms. I felt like a poor tramp to put her out, but she seemed more than anxious to do it, and I guess a franc a day must look pretty big to her. So we've put up three cots in her little ten by ten bedroom and Stair has his in the kitchen. And—clean—I've never seen a cleaner kitchen or room, while the view up the valley and on to the mountains is superb.

Our cars are drawn up in order along the curb. There's a little brick house that the chefs use for a kitchen. We set up the folding tables on the sidewalk and thus we live, literally, in the street. But it's not at all bad. You know how clean a little Swiss village is and it's the same here. The grub is fair—it's the same old line—we're always hungry and have the American passion in France for chocolate, eggs, and milk. Tomorrow (Sunday) I hear we are to have eggs and bacon for breakfast—supreme, isn't it? There's only one person I

know of who could really be happy on these breakfasts and that's you, Dad—because it's really no breakfast at all—just bread and coffee (black as pitch).

The first three days here we kept busy on our cars, getting them in good order, oiled, tires repaired, engine cleaned and thorough washing. Yes, we wash our cars—in fact we keep them as clean as any New York chauffeur would for a drive on Fifth Avenue. Number Seven runs splendidly—and I like the driving. Yes, we also wear neckties out here and shave regularly.

The Fourth blew around on schedule, but it wasn't a very grand and glorious Fourth, though I think the most unique of any in my travels. We started off to have a holiday, so the four of us procured some hard boiled eggs, bread, cheese, confiture, and beer and went up the nearest mountain. It wasn't much of a climb, but we lost the path—and devilish poor climbing it was, in underbrush up to our heads. We had our feast, gathered a bottle full of blueberries, and then sought shelter from an oncoming thunder shower. We landed, ten minutes from the top, in an old deserted barn, found an old table, rigged up some seats, and had an afternoon of bridge to the tune of rain, blueberries, and the whir of an occasional aeroplane, getting back to the village at six in a smart rain. We were to have a large feed and because of the rain we moved our tables into a huge automobile stock room. It was

quite a feast in its simple way—from soup to coffee; fish, meat, potatoes, salad, jam, cheese, and pudding (rice). After that we adjourned to an entertainment hall where a French orchestra made up of soldiers here gave a concert and one of the soldiers sang from La Tosca and Carmen. Really he had a very good voice. Then our lieutenant delivered French salutations as did a French major who also read a circular letter from General Petain to all Americans in France. It was quite a day.

But now, having our cars all in order again, there's little to do. There's a river close by for a swim and plenty of walks in the mountains, and as our lieutenant has gone to Paris for his eight day permission I judge we'll serve some time here.

This afternoon the first mail in two weeks arrived—with your letter, Mother, of the 17th. It was great to hear again. There are several letters from the 6th to the 18th that I have not received.

The July *Atlantic* also came—and that's a great treat too—at least a whole afternoon's good reading.

That's all this time—with a great deal of love and know that I'm very glad to be where I am—in France.

Ever affectionately, HENRY.

15me Juillet, 1917.

Two weeks tomorrow we've been here. You would think we'd tire of it; but no, we are so

resigned to waits that I can really begin to take what comes without grumbling.

We are known here as Mons. George, Mons. Frederic, Mons. Henri, and Mons. Difficile—the latter because they cannot pronounce "Russel," Stair's first name, and there's no French name to take its place.

We have many walks, many games of bridge, letter writing, a little reading, much talk, French lessons, talks with the natives, swims in the river, much sleep, and once in a while I do a little thinking—so goes the day.

Again, we've had a fête day, the Fourteenth of July. You know it's the same as our Fourth. There was little celebration in the village—many flags of all the allies, but particularly our own, a few fire-crackers and many people promenading. That's about the extent of the "extras" for the day, besides a feast in the evening, supplied by the militaire—the same feast thruout France, which closed with cigars and a glass of champagne. But really, the dinner didn't compare with the one they gave us on the Fourth.

Yesterday we took another long walk up the mountains to a little café where there was an old-fashioned dance in progress to the tune of a horrible old automatic piano. George Reed and I amused the crowd with one turn around the hall.

Friday there took place a presentation of medals in the village square and we were party to the same, along with an equal num-

ber of *poilus* and another section of American Ambulance men who are quartered here—all Yale men. To take part in this it was necessary to drill in the French style so we mastered all we could in two hours. But our Sandricourt drill came in handy and it only took a little practice to learn the French commands and an adjustment to a different style of march and movement.

The French drill—like everything else French—is quick as lightning, much more fatiguing, but has its superior points in other ways. The command, *gardez-vous*, brings you to attention which nearly breaks your back for the hands must be held palm out—the little finger on the trouser seam. It throws your shoulders much farther back and is extremely awkward. Thus we stood for an hour while these three *croix du guerres* were presented by the Major.

A small crowd gathered, a most harsh octette of bugles contributed the music, and then we all filed by the Major in grand review. No doubt you've seen the same thing in the movies. I remember it, though I never expected to be an active participant.

Another interesting event was the celebration of the *fête d'Henri* and that of Frederic. Today—the 15th—is my day and Fritz's came on the 11th. I believe the French custom on these days is to present all the Henris or Frederics with a large bunch of flowers and thus our feminine crowd here took great pleas-

use in presenting us with enormous bouquets the evening before. I think often of the garden you write about at home and regret that I've never seen it in its glory, but here, too, are flowers in profusion—many more than the summer ones in Minnesota, and the French are lovers of them.

We've had both good and bad weather. It matters little after all—the mountains are always interesting—and especially these moonlight nights.

That's all this time. I'd like to write of some real hard work but it has to be provided apparently. Love to you all. HENRY.

July 30, 1917.

My dear Mother: You've been neglected this past two weeks—but you know my letters to any one of the family are for each one of you and especially you, though it seems that I can write more easily directly to one than the inclusive "dear family." No change of location—hence the mail came regularly including another envelope of clippings and your two good letters of June 30th and July 3d.

The boys are instituting new pastimes—golf is the latest addition. You wouldn't believe that golf clubs and balls were attainable in R—— but they are, carefully cut from old logs and planks. Four of the boys have made a set of clubs and several balls—all with the knife and file. They have their drivers, mashies, and putters shaped exactly like any

real club, with joints, handles padded, etc. I saw one of the boys make a hundred yard drive yesterday which is pretty good for a wooden outfit.

Splendid weather, though it rains today, and the nights now with the moon are divine. Last evening—*toujours heureux* Mlle. Marguerite got us up another fine dinner—with a perfectly respectable honest fillet of beef smothered in onions and all the potatoes, *haricots verts*, and coffee that we could put away. She's a wonderful cook.

Nearly all of the inhabitants of this place work in a big cotton mill and M. took us thru it the other day—a thoroughly up-to-date mill, with American, English, and Alsatian machinery, clean and light, and much better than many American factories. Now practically all the workers are women, earning for a nine-hour day about seventy cents, while the few men receive eighty to ninety, and the poor old men that I did see were either visiting, taking time out for a smoke, or asleep on a bale of cotton. They make a rough cotton cloth (all for the army), bandages, gas masks, etc.—taking the cotton thru all processes from the raw bale to the finished product.

About the most worth while thing one can do these days is to keep in good health and pick up French, so I spend several hours at a time studying and always there's opportunity to practise with Mlle. and her friends and we have simple but good times. What a pipe it

would be to be taking a French exam. for college and how much easier things come when you've got a motive.

There's little to say, Mother. Thank Joe for his second letter from camp. Keep well and don't worry—don't do too much. Give my love to Aunt S. Glad to have the wedding and engagement announcements.

A great deal of love to you all. HENRY.

VERDUN AND THEREABOUTS

Aug. 5, 1917.

My dear Father and Mother: Today finds us in a very different scene from that of a week ago. In place of green mountain sides, clean villages, and immaculately arranged houses, there are brown fields, scarred with quantities of broken rocks, sordid and dismantled little hamlets, and mud, mud, mud everywhere.

I had little more than finished my last letter when came the order for Section 61 to move. In our usual haste, we packed and tuned the cars up late Monday (July 30th) afternoon and were ready for an early start the next morning. And all the packing—all the driving—the eating—the wandering—think of it, always in the rain—for so it's been for seven days; but slickers with rubber boots keep one wonderfully dry all the time.

Mlle. Marguerite was much depressed at our leaving—and she must rise early Tuesday morning and serve us bowls of *café au lait*, bread, butter, and jam. Then *au revoirs* came with some shedding of tears on her part—so you see we must have won some place with her for our extended stay; but I noticed she

picked up considerably after we had presented her with a little envelope. At least I can thank her for a great deal of French which gave me a very good start.

Early Tuesday we were off *en convoi*– knowing our destination for a two days' run, but not with the least idea of what it meant. The first day was a beautiful run, pulling into a fairly respectable town just before dinner and putting up at the cantonment there– a French automobile park. The town looked as if it might afford something in the way of good food and we dined respectably and completely at a hotel–and then, Allah be praised! we got a couple of rooms for the night. Stair and myself had one of these French "mountains" to ourselves and perhaps that bed didn't fit well, my first indulgence in such for exactly two months. In this town we found several U. S. press reporters and had some interesting talks, and yes, we met boys of our troops. They are here in numbers for we've seen them with our own eyes–and how good the American uniform looks!

The second day took us another half day's run–and the whole day we were passing thru villages and quarters of our own troops, fine, healthy, browned looking chaps, who at present are working their heads off training under French officers–trench warfare and the like. It must be a terrific program from what they said. Of course like all the rest of the Americans they are wild to have their chance

at it, but I'm afraid there are not enough to use for a good many months yet. They are wonderfully secluded in these houses and the Boche aeros haven't a chance of discovering them. They are spread along the road in groups for many miles. We were lucky enough to catch a fleeting glance of General Pershing, passing his staff cars on the road.

We spent the second afternoon and night in our automobile *parc* amid much rain; but it was a large enough place to warrant looking at twice, while many U. S. marines quartered near there gave us some one to talk to. We expected to remain there several days, but were ordered out the next day, coming to this little town late that afternoon. Here we are settled—have been for three days; they say it will be eight—probably two or three weeks. At any rate we are near the front, a part of the front where there is considerable action and on the main road to one of the biggest sectors in France—so that the traffic is interesting beyond description. It's called the Sacred Way for more men have gone up this road never to come back than any other road in the world. We are still unattached to any army. Why we don't get into action is beyond me.

Upon our arrival we were greeted by another section of our corps; one week they'd been out of Sandricourt. It included the Fish boys, Allan Rogers, Frank Carleton, and Nat Chadbourne. It was great to see them all and get the latest word from home.

Our French lieutenant immediately appropriated the best quarters in town, in spite of the fact that there were two other sections here ahead of us, but that isn't saying much. We have the best of the twenty houses—a large courtyard on the main road and this large farm house in the rear. The courtyard contains our cars in which most of the boys sleep along with numerous chickens, ducks, dogs, cows, horses, and all manner of farm truck. The most conspicuous ornament is mud, though the sun is actually trying to shine at present. The officers have three or four rooms in the house; and the four of us have two rooms—one franc a day with regular beds. It must have been quite a prosperous farm house in its day, as this room from which I write is paneled and draperied with the usual heavy French fixings, while clocks and vases under mushroom glasses adorn the mantlepiece. It's quite a relief to have a dry place to go.

As for the rest of the village—there's little to recommend it. The road running thru the center is dirty and overrun with farm animals. There are perhaps ten civilians; the rest have fled, for in early September, 1914, the Germans were here. About the only peaceful landmark now is a little river, for the fury of their terrible 200's and 220's made a terrible impression in the center of the little group of houses. They evidently trained them on this one little spot. The movie pictures give you a

vivid picture of how these bombarded towns look. (At present a thunder storm is tuning up and I must bring some drying clothes in.) There has been no effort to build up the houses—the roofs are all gone, in many cases all four walls—and what remains are merely lone walls and fireplaces. On the hill above are abandoned trenches, full of empty cartridges and pieces of hand grenades and trench lighters, while the ground is warped and broken—deep holes and furrows everywhere. Now a poor grass and sod is covering it—though it doesn't look as if it would ever bear crops again. But even here, not many miles from the front, are good crops and the plums are especially delicious just now. You can't imagine how really peaceful it is in France when you're away on a hilltop. We climbed there last night and listened to the perpetual distant roar, boom, and thud of cannon, while below on the road hundreds of camions were taking their loads of *poilus* to the front. I've seen them closer too, of course—as they pass our courtyard, tired, bedraggled men, with little singing, but a yell or two for the Americans. But do you wonder they look tired after three years of this?

I'm getting anxious for some more mail—none for nearly two weeks now—and I know nothing of the outside world these last four days. Wonder if you've sent any packages. I can always use cigarettes, tobacco, chocolate, books, shaving soap, tooth paste. The pack-

ages seem to be getting thru with no red tape whatsoever.

There are more letters to write. I wonder what kind of a Sunday afternoon *you* are having—probably on our sun parlor at the lake after one of Mother's splendid roast beefs and macaroni. A great deal of love to each one of the dear family. HENRY.

11 Aug. 1917.

My dear Mother: There's much to write about and this letter may have to be halted at any moment, as I'm on duty waiting an American ambulance car to take me to the front to show me the various roads, the *postes de secours*, and the way of the work—so I'll tell you what I can though my hand is perhaps none too steady, with my first "experience" not far off. I expect to be scared until I have a very good looking pompadour, but wouldn't miss it for anything.

I wrote Sister that we had moved again. Quite right, going some twenty kilos from my last writing to you, to B——, another little demolished village. There we were formally attached to our present division, about 15,000 men, and one of the finest attacking divisions in the army—four regiments of infantry, two battalions of *Chasseurs au Pied* (the flower of the French army), and one company of artillery. The whole division has won the *fourragére*—which requires three citations before the whole army. They, too, are differ-

ent entirely from my previous sight of the French troops—young, vigorous, full of life and enthusiasm, still ready for the fray, the spirit which characterized the French in the early days when we passed thru France, three years ago.

We were at B—— three days, putting all the finishing touches on our cars in the way of cleanliness, grease, oil, and tires. Most of the tire trouble comes from the quantities of hob-nails left in the roads off the soldiers' shoes. Yesterday morning we were off early for the final run to the front, where we make our headquarters just alongside the base hospital, with the front about eleven kilometres in three directions. It was the pleasantest day we'd had for a run, heavy rain the night before, cool, no dust, and the roads practically dry.

We arrived about noon and my first look was not up to my expectations of a few miles behind the trenches. Of course much evidence of activity in the way of convoys on the road and many troops—but the guns were not loud. One had to listen for their pounding. The sun shone and from this hill one looks for miles to the south where runs a quiet river with its line of high green trees, woods a-plenty against the blue sky, fields browned with a ripening crop, flowers, yes—beside our little camping ground—and war looked serener than I had thought. But towards the battle lines, which are over a hill, were hills of brown mud with great gray ghosts of what were trees.

We set to work parking our cars and then put up four large tents, three to hold us and one for office and kitchen. We worked happily on, but as skies became clearer the boom of guns became more distinct; huge observation balloons slowly rose—perhaps five miles behind the front—while from our hill we could see them for miles, and they clearly picture the line as they swing in and out showing the "salients." Aeroplane activity commenced soon—literally dozens in the air—like flies—always their buzz, though sometimes even too high to see. Then little puffs of white smoke appear on high and in the midst appears a Boche plane—but towards the line appear black puffs of smoke and you know it's the Boche firing on the French. But these anti-aircraft guns seldom hit their mark—and it's more to keep the planes up high.

Stair and myself were enjoying this aeronautic matinee from the rear end of our cars where we could see for miles the planes chasing each other. A Boche plane suddenly appears from his hiding place above a cloud, diving straight down, with a rat-a-tat of his machine gun distinctly audible, a stream of smoke and fire in the wake and he's almost upon a *saucisson* (one of the observation balloons called such because they look like huge sausages). He swerves—a man drops in his parachute from the balloon—the latter bursts into flames and falls—while the Boche is off with a host of French planes following. And then we witnessed a spectacular fight,

with the French plane winning and driving the Boche to earth.

The next minute I found myself in a ditch, flat on my stomach alongside my car, and Tut was bumping his head on my heels in his rush to do the same. There had come the first whistle and accompanying crash of a shell lighting about 200 yards away on a road. We were up in a minute laughing at our antics and the others who had dropped in their tracks, while the Frenchmen were running like scared rabbits for the *abris* (dugouts). Then came another and we went down – and still another, and the cloud of black smoke would arise from near the road. Our friends in American Ambulance No. 1 alongside laugh at us and say a shell has to come within fifty yards to have any danger, and then if you're on the ground it's not apt to be bad.

Supper came and went – and the early evening brought more air activity. We walked to a nearby cemetery – eight thousand graves with their little wooden crosses and simple decoration – name – regiment – a tri-color circle – and the inscription *Mort pour la France*; that's all to mark these heroes.

The guns began to play more vigorously as sunset came – the 75's were audible. As darkness fell the balloons and planes disappeared, signal lights and gun flashes rose over the hills and a glorious sunset put all the spectacle of war to sorry shame. A clear sky with many stars was the scene when I went to bed – really somewhat serene except for the low boom of

cannon and the rattle of thousands of artillery wheels and *ravitaillement* (supply) wagons as they started their nightly journey to the front. I was asleep in a minute—not to awake until five this morning when the guns started up a terrific cannonading.

The next three weeks will be busy ones for us—with all sorts of work—little sleep—but don't worry—I'll write as often as I can. At last there will be something that one can do in a real contribution. It's immense to be here—one doesn't ask to be spared hardship over here—only the means and good will to take them as they come.

Not a word from you for two weeks and a half—only a letter from Gerald and Father's of the 9th. Hope for some soon. At last I've located Jimmie Hamilton. He writes that he is in a base hospital with an American Expedition Force and somewhere near Sandricourt I believe.

We're comfortable in our tents. It's warm enough at night with three blankets and a rubber one to keep off the damp and some extra overcoats.

A great deal of love, Mother—I suppose "no news is good news" and await your letters. You must think the same. HENRY.

16 August, 1917.

My dear Joe: We've just finished dinner—soup—meat and spinach—bread and jam—a very good layout, and especially attractive in-

asmuch as we have a new tent for our tables. Previously we've always eaten outside, rain, wind, or shine. Of course, a violent rain storm dilutes the soup a bit—but that matters little in these days.

If you looked in on us just now you would find fourteen beds on opposite sides of a huge tent with Cross in the middle sort of sandwich like. There's an accordion playing in another tent and George Reed is tuning up his mouth-organ on the bed next to me. But even these noises don't quite silence that eternal din and popping over the hills. It's always there—sometimes intermittently—at other times a perpetual roar—with a few spliced nearer shots as a shell explodes in the valley or a battery sends one over to the Boche.

There's such a vast variety of noises about here and over the hill in that different country that one actually has to make a study of them to know what's happening about him. There's the terrific bang of a French battery—and their batteries actually line the roads along which we travel on the way to the *poste de secours*. They are simply deafening at close range, and for a fact actually lift your helmet off your head at times. Then there are any number of different sizes of guns. There's an old boy, not so very far away from here, who talks up once or twice a night, and when he does speak—Oh, what a growl! We call him old Monsieur 380 and he can very easily roll

you over in bed if you happen to be tired of your position. Then you hear the whistle of the shell as it starts on its way to the Boche and every time I hope it brings this war a little closer to an end. These very large guns for the most part are carried on little railroad tracks – the guns mounted on flat cars. The shells only cost about 20,000 fr. apiece and six shells is a carload. To continue with the category of noises. You have to learn by the whistle when a shell is coming close or far. Somehow whenever it comes close there's some impelling force that sends you flat on your face, or if there's time into an *abri* (dug-out), or perhaps under your car. Oh, the wildest whistle, scream, and screech that you can imagine. Put a thousand of them together and the pandemonium in the air above is terrific as the batteries speak up. Then there's the same whistle of the gas shell, but it has no loud explosion – only a sickening sputtering as it lands and that's the warning to put on your mask, always around your neck. And back here we have our gongs at the hospital which signal an enemy plane overhead and a bugle which tells that the danger is over. Then for the coming of the gas you can hear little bells tolling thruout the valley. And in the air there's the rat-a-tat-tat of machine guns as they fight in the air, or give signals below to the artillery. Still another distinctly different boom is the exploding of shrapnel in the air

zone from the anti-aircraft guns. So you see in brief what initiation at the front means and what you are up against the first night out.

I wrote Mother of the hill – scarred and battered – which lay in the distance. My first run came Sunday afternoon when I went with one of the American Ambulance boys in his Ford to learn the roads and be of what assistance I could. It's perhaps two miles across the valley and half way up the hill, where are always stationed several cars. There's a splendid *abri* there with steel sides, and lined with white canvas, bunks, and benches, telephones, office, and medicinal equipment. We waited here for the telephone call to take us to a *poste de secours* but none came for several hours. The time passed with much talk and watching shells break over the villages here and there – while air activity was always fascinating. A walk to the crest of the hill revealed a sight which I can't picture. Here lay the land in which fighting had taken place. Inch by inch the Germans had been driven back out of this valley and over another ridge, but at what a cost! And here were the evidences – not a tree in foliage, only things that looked like broken telephone posts – a little green from this year's growth of weeds – the ground seared and furrowed – pitted and potted – trench marked – a different world than this. It looks like a dessert – that's all. There's a little village over there – at least 'twas said to be – but there's not even a wall two feet high in evidence – nothing

but broken stones – that's all to mark it. And the very ground on which I walked was much of the same nature – trenches half filled with stinking water, broken down dugouts, discarded equipment of all kinds, and enough shells lying about to make a first class iron mine. Crosses everywhere, and in another spot they were bringing in huge wagons filled with "morts." So was the first glimpse. After a lunch of canned meat and jam we waited into the evening and then – it was to bed on our brancards (stretchers) in the *abri.* But it was only a short sleep, made shorter by the presence of numerous bugs and rats, which finally ended in a chase with my helmet and flashlights as weapons. At eleven came the order for a car to C——, the farthest of our *postes de secours* and the hardest road and everything else. On top of that the man had never made the trip before to this place and we only had vague directions to follow. So it was out into the pitch black – feeling your way somewhere along those traffic filled roads, not knowing where you were going and always the roar. Somehow we got along in the right direction, though we often got off the road a little and had to retrace our run. Always you're bumping a camion or hitting a horse – but there aren't any traffic policemen on these roads. A camion goes in the ditch but it matters little and if it's possible a dozen men push it out or there it sticks. The horses rear and plunge when guns or shells go off close to them

but their behavior is nothing short of miraculous under the circumstances. Then we lost our way completely—and were off three or four hundred yards at times, running down little paths and ruined roads, in the hope of some one who might know of our destination.

And it's there in the quiet of the mud-piled back-paths that one gets the awfulness of the surroundings, the utter desolation of it all—not a blade of grass—every particle of earth churned by shell fire—the shells screaming overhead—the continued booming and banging—a lone man passing—a head sticking out of a dugout—a dead horse—the clatter of things moving on the road. It's weird and grotesque and another land—not this earth that we ever knew. And you think of all this on French territory—none of it in Germany. They've had nothing of this desolation. And you think of the men who've lived in this for three years and marvel at the courage that can make them hold on in the hope now of America!

But we've found the road again and the little Ford goes bouncing and clattering along, and I marvel at the driver who could keep it from the ditches. Again we got off the road and finally the road became a little path. To the left, huge dugouts, and to the right, perhaps a fifty foot drop below to a ravine. It looked two hundred in that inky black. But somehow the boy backed out of it a good three hundred yards, and we were

on the road again we hoped, but never certain. Next we were plunging on foot down steep embankments to a dugout—lone and deserted it looked. I started in with a flashlight—no signs of life, but away to the rear was the green glow of a wrist watch. Grabbing the hand, it turned out to be a telephone post and at last someone could give us the definite directions which brought us in to the *poste de secours*, *tout a l' heure*, that last stretch over a road not more than three hundred yards from the trenches, the star shells almost falling on the road and the *poste de secours* only one thousand yards from the Boche trenches themselves. Then there were new noises with the ever rat-tat of the machine guns in the trenches popping away over the noise of the terrific cannonading. But what a relief to be there—as the P. S. heaped over with sandbags and earth seemed like a stronghold. Three *couchers* and one *assis* was the quiet cargo for our return trip. I was riding most of the way on the fender, running ahead on the up-grade, cranking the car it seemed every two minutes—but at last back to the central station. There they were most kind with two cups of hot tea, then a little more sleep after this three-hour run, then another quiet run in the mist of the morning and we were back to camp at nine the next morning.

Since then four of our cars have been going every night and last night with a particularly heavy attack on for a few hours eleven of the

cars were out all night and the boys all doing splendidly. In the meantime I have to sit down here – and you're wild to be with the rest of them – because I had the misfortune to burn out my magneto on rear evacuation work. You see we only bring the most urgent cases to the fine Field Hospital. The others are sifted out and sent immediately, perhaps fifteen miles, back to the base hospitals. It was on my first run to the latter that the trouble came and I had the experience of looking for a telephone to get word to the hospital to send out for my five *couchers*. They came immediately and as we were not far the men were safe in the hospital inside of twenty minutes after the breakdown. Another car was sent down to tow me in and then by telephoning to our camp via the Field Hospital I was towed back twenty odd kilometres. Such are the misfortunes of a car.

Lovingly your brother, HENRY.

23 August, 1917.

My dear Father and Mother: Nearly the first of September, which looked so far away back in April and has come so surprisingly fast. Days just come and go and one cannot count them. I even had to ask five men the other day to find out the correct date and day of the week. The last six days have been perfect ones – clear skies and now a little new moon lighting what I thought was my peaceful valley on arrival. And it does have things

that war cannot alter, sunsets of a pink clouded sky with steel grays on the horizons and a glorious turquoise sky here and there, stars bright as in August, but always the flash and boom of cannon, always the whir of aeroplane. Days are hot, too hot in our tents, and no shade to relieve one, while nights are getting hot, and war even makes them hotter—in your mind.

It's a week since I wrote Joe—a week of great things—of hundreds of impressions—of great enthusiasms—nervous system keyed to the highest pitch on many occasions—week of sleepless nights—week in which one learns of real values of men—week I can never forget—week that I can never hope to put on paper as it has really been.

Thru it all my part has been a small one, with a broken-down car, as no magneto has arrived, and I've had to stay in camp many times while others were doing their all at the front, filling in when there was a tired driver or an extra car at hand and taking my bad luck as best I could. By this time, of course, you know of the great French drive and of its wonderful success up to date. We've been in the very thick of it watching the tremendous preparations thru the last three months and driving over the roads that the Boche were so consistently shelling in a vain attempt to stop the preparations. I believe it was the 11th—that early morning terrific cannonading that I spoke of—when things began to really happen, when the French artillery commenced its ter-

rific nine-day bombardment which a German major (prisoner) has told us was the worst fire that was ever emptied into them in the three years of the war. Regiment after regiment went into the trenches only to be mowed down and that accounts for the apparent speed of the drive, the actual attack lasting not more than six hours at the most, though of course slight advances and the repulsing of counter attacks have been the order of the day since the 20th. The heaviest fighting took place on the other side of the river where the two famous hills have been retaken. In those few days think what the French have done—retaken all the territory that cost the Kronprinz nearly 500,000 men to take; and they never dreamed of taking it with such rapidity. The French losses have been comparatively small. In our own division out of perhaps fifteen thousand men the killed and wounded amounted to not more than 800 men. We were prepared to handle nearly three times that many. The Boche of course knew that it was coming and the three days before the attack were even hotter than the actual day, as they were shelling the valley and roads continually. Sunday night, the 19th, was tense—quietness until about four o'clock, when a continuous cannonading commenced for a four-hour preparation and everyone knew that the attack of infantry would come the next morning. All our cars were on duty, half at the front and half here at the hospital, to carry

back the overflow and less severely wounded to other hospitals. At about four Monday morning again the artillery were at it in their final preparation and at five the men went over the lines for the great drive. You know as much as we do about its success – how they found the German trenches almost wiped out – how the Boche went down on their knees to be taken prisoners – and as yet all counter attacks have been repulsed.

Our own work was not nearly as strenuous as had been expected during the next two days. Everything went off like clockwork. The men worked wonderfully well. Our section's performance lay not so much in the number of wounded that we had to carry, but the danger of the road from which we had to transport them, all of the wounded coming from our farthest *poste*. I didn't get a chance at the front work during the first two days – doing some transporting in the rear evacuation work. But there were those who had most miraculous escapes – how we all got out of it with our lives only Providence knows – perhaps it was Providence that kept me here – who knows? I know that when one is on those dark and shell torn roads, one trusts absolutely in something to guide him thru. There were some of the boys who stayed in *abris* for hours while the roads were bombarded. Others were not so fortunate and lay in ditches while the shells broke all about. In all, five cars were punctured by shells – one with fifteen separate holes

in it. Every car has smashed and broken fenders and it's a sad looking outfit. And yet all but one escaped.

You've heard how George Reed was hit no doubt by this time. It was the night of the 16th when Bullard came in with a hurry call for several cars. Everyone but three of us in this tent went—including George, Tut, and Fritz, and I was wild at being left down here. My sleep was spasmodic, something was in the air, and at four in the morning Tut came in and told me that George had been hit—would I come over to the hospital and stay with him. I found him, with his bandaged hand—two fingers and part of his hand gone. They had just started back from the *poste* when it happened, Tut driving and George his aide—the shell landing just back of the car and Fritz with his load on the other side. They came back the five odd miles with never a word of complaint from George and he had the presence of mind upon arrival to give the officer an order from the *poste*. He was attended to immediately at the hospital by the very best surgeons. I sat all day with him, but it was a trying day, with him injured, a room full of wounded men—several dying. I sha'n't forget it or the other side—the wonderful pluck of all those men. George's greatest regret was that he was out of it. He's getting along finely. He'll be going to Paris tomorrow. Yesterday he was presented the *croix du guerre*. It seems like a small reward for

what he gave but he surely deserves it and more too. The *croix* with a gold star means a citation before the army corps to which we are attached. Also there came a congratulatory letter from the General thanking the section for its work. Mr. Norton visited us three times the last week going out to the bad poste one night with a couple of the boys. He'd been in this three years and worked the whole length of the front. I think they spent about half that night in ditches and *abris*. At any rate he said it was the hardest poste he had ever seen. So you see what we got for our baptismal work at the front.

I went out with Fritz night before last but it was a quiet night and we made only one trip. It was a beautiful starlight night and weirdness at its height with the wild moan of the shells as they passed overhead. We spent a couple of hours at the base poste and at two in the morning were sent on to get a load but had to wait for two hours there. So we slept in the *abri* there amidst the desolation. This *abri* was sunk in the ground, as most of them are, made of concrete, about five by twelve in size. There were eleven dozing occupants upon our arrival but these generous poilus readily made room for two more. I must be getting hard, for I slept soundly for an hour, with cannon barking outside, a hard concrete floor for my body, the wooden handle of a stretcher for a pillow, and not even a stiff muscle when I got up at four. We had a won-

derful ride thru the early dawn to the base hospital down the valley with the exception of three flat tires, caused by striking an object on the dark road which proved to be an unexploded shell. Fortunately we didn't hit the timer or it might have been more than a flat tire or two.

Monday evening evidences of the attack and its success appeared. First in the form of a grey-olive cloud such as they described coming thru Belgium three years ago. They passed on the road 200 yards away in a long column of fours, 800 Boche prisoners, and since then there are daily arrivals of Boche wounded at the hospital. There must be eighty odd of them now and the French treat them wonderfully well, the same beds and food as the French. But they do look different, there's not the individuality of the French army – dirty of course. We've all forgotten our German but we did find out that they thought the war would be over soon – but they didn't express any opinion on the outcome. They said they hadn't had anything to eat for three days, the French fire having cut off all supplies.

It's great to be behind a victorious army! We're all enthusiastic now. It looks like the beginning of the end, but how long will that take – they hang on so doggedly. Yesterday the front was so quiet, one felt it must be the end of the war, so peaceful it was, but some-

how our hopes of the end were dashed with last night.

We had just gone to bed. We'd been watching the searchlights play the heavens for the hostile craft – the signal lights – the mounting fuses – the flash of bursting shrapnel high above – a wonderful sight. But that had been a common thing for several nights though it had been a little livelier when one fellow dropped three bombs not far away the night before. We were in bed at nine. There was a terrific whir above – a plane close to earth – but the French planes often fly over us, and though we held our breath as he passed over, nothing occurred. Perhaps ten minutes passed as we joked about it when there came another whirring. It was below us in the valley and mounting steadily towards us as the ear detected it. I made for the outside in pajamas and my bright blue French slippers. He was there. I could plainly see him even in the dark perhaps 200 feet above the ground. I moved towards a group of the boys who were watching and wondering what it was when there came the banging of a machine gun. That was enough! I knocked down about ten tent ropes and landed over in the *abri* as the crowd rushed in with me. There was a general exodus from the tents. Fritz landed in a trench upside down. Some were in bare feet, some half dressed, others with only pajamas and a steel helmet. Then the party started – terrific bombing on the hill 300 yards away.

These bombs are worse than anything else in the way of explosions – there's no dodging them by their whistle and they are perfectly terrific in explosion. Well we'd come out after a little and start for bed again and there'd be another banging of machine guns, bombing, flashes, and whirring as the Boche bombed and shot at the roads, blew up munition wagons, etc. This lasted for a good five hours and when the bombs went off, you could swear they were on top of the *abri.* At any rate, they've been doing a lot of this the last few days. They've gotten several hospitals nearby – but I really doubt it's outright intention. There are excuses when they are trying for railroads and munition plants nearby. The hospitals could be much more judiciously placed.

I suppose we'll be pulling out of here in a couple of weeks – it will be something of a relief to one's nervous system. Have found "Student in Arms" most interesting; there's so very much there that comes into our daily lives here.

Much love to each one of you. Don't worry. It's all a part of one's "daily bit."

Affectionately yours, HENRY.

31 August, 1917.

My dear Mother: There isn't a great deal to tell of this past week as the work goes on much the same with little variation in our

own camp life, but there's always plenty of variation at the front.

The great fortified French city is only a five minutes' run. We look over into it from our little plateau. At a distance it has all the look of a thriving metropolis – for there still stand even the towers of its most imposing edifice. But it's not a particularly healthy place. Every day the Boche sends in his compliments and we hear the boom of the cannon, the low whine of the shell, and then comes the crash. Of course there are no civilians in these front line towns and I've seen just one woman since we arrived three weeks ago today. These shells I speak of above come quite regularly, as the Boche sends them in nearly without fail in the late afternoon just as if it were for a French general's tea. But then he's also irregular enough to keep people guessing and does it at many other times.

Just at present with work lighter – only four or five cars to go out a day – I've had only two trips this last week. It's perhaps two miles up the hill to the first *poste de secours* – and we wait there for direct calls to the front line *poste de secours*. Sometimes we go right out and wait at the front line poste until they have a load – it being much easier to make a daylight trip as there is less traffic, practically none, and also less shelling by the Boche. But the artillery men along the roads object to much of our travel by daylight as they think it brings a little more fire on them.

I've had two days this last week – the first one was a trip to C—— in the early evening, returning at about seven in the morning – so I had the night up at C——. You see this *poste* is about the last place in any sort of civilization at all – being the last *poste* which can be reached by road. From there everything must go by foot to the men in the front line. C—— is a rocked stronghold. It's built in a sort of quarry about one hundred fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, a regular little city of *abris*, with kitchens, offices, telepone, bunks, operating rooms. In its innermost *abris* there towers over you a good twenty feet of solid rock – and a steady bombardment of the big shells would be withstood.[1] Up some stairs one can climb to the *boyaux* (communicating trenches) where comes and goes a stream of men with water, meat, bread, mail, and all wants of the men in front. The sides of these trenches are lined with intricate systems of wires, while they are deep enough to conceal the tallest man.

The operating room itself is back underneath the rock – a little five by ten room with white canvassing making an impression of cleanliness. The walls are covered with cupboards containing cotton and bandages, bottles and tubes of anti-tetanous cafiene and morphine. They bring a man in here – brought in thru the *boyaux* – adjust his bandage or put on new ones and give a crude first aid. In

[1] This *abri* was nevertheless afterwards crushed by a shell.

rare cases there's an operation. I sat in here for three or four hours, talking with doctors, watching, writing, and reading. These men are so wonderfully good to you – they treat you like officers. But then there's a different spirit here than any place else. You can't be so mindful of the dangers, Mother, when you know what a wonderful life it is, where there's no sham, you are more thoroughly alive to those about you than ever before, where everyone is keen, generous, ready to sacrifice and to share. I hope we can all remember the lessons we learn about here where a man proves himself. It's so evident even in our own crowd where we know who's standing the gaff – and most everyone has come thru.

This last week has been full of rain but we don't mind that any more. It's much better than aeroplanes. It made me a hard run early yesterday morning about four-thirty, out to C——, mud everywhere, shell holes and all. At times the car would scarcely make the grade on low speed.

I'm looking anxiously for the malted milks and fountain pen. The boys keep getting packages. One came today, sent on August 10th from New York. Mother, remember my fondness for pickles, *ginger*, figs, olives, etc. Do you suppose you could send a few? – and always smokes.

There are so many people whom I want to write but my correspondence keeps to a very

limited set. It seems about all there is time for.

Always much love to you, Mother—good days to you. There are some wonderful things to live for over here. Think of those—and that I'm in it.

Affectionately yours, HENRY.

EN REPOS

September 6, 1917.

My dear Mother: Back of the lines again and we are all supremely content. We are about five miles from B——, the same town we were in immediately before going to the Verdun sector. Beautiful weather these last few days and the moon contributing to perfectly splendid nights. Sunday night came the order to go back *en repos*, though we didn't actually move until Tuesday morning it being necessary to wait for an English section which was to replace us. I had the good luck to drive our lieutenant down to Bar-le-Duc Sunday, and putting up there over night in a regular hotel was something of a luxury. I was tempted to stay awake all night for the sheer joy of appreciating the feathers and quilts. After a real honest breakfast in the morning we walked the streets—fascinated by such tempting shops—and purchased a jar of the famous currant jam. I had previously seen the peasant women in the back country preparing the currants, all the seeds being removed by hand.

That same day we came here to L——,

where we were on duty at the service of the divisional headquarters, the following day going back to our camp, spending a rather sleepless night dodging aeroplanes and coming *en convoi* here on Tuesday. We're very content and comfortable here, have a very picturesque farm house on the outskirts of the little battered village for our headquarters – while we've put up a couple of tents in a green grassy orchard. It's great. We'll never forget our last three weeks. Things came and went so fast (especially the shells), but I can now look back on it with a great deal of satisfaction – to have been through it – to have seen and lived that front line work. But three weeks of it is enough at a time. As a matter of fact, the troops don't stay in much more than ten days. Our division came up after us and went back *en repos* before us. They fully lived up to their former laurels in the attack and have won even more honors.

The new situation of our Corps is apparently the same as I outlined in my last letter. The government has taken over the work and as nearly everyone expects to leave the service, we shall only stay on until men can be brought over to replace us.

There's little more to say this time. How strange it seems to be going into fall days! The last three weeks have flown. Don't know when I've felt better either. Much love to each one of the dear family – and to you.

HENRY.

September 12, 1917.

My dear Mother: Your good letter of August 22nd arrived on the 10th—which makes pretty rapid time; it doesn't make Minnesota look so far away after all. I'm thinking of Joe's soon departure—tho no one has mentioned it as yet. What a busy pen you'll be keeping, Mother, with both lads away. I'm so glad that we all had that last winter together and we'll hope for another like it before long.

Camp life *en repos* is divine after one has been at the front. It's so exquisitely lazy—such a happy good-natured crowd—especially our fourteen men in a tent under two trees of ripening apples and pears. The fourteen of us were together at the front—tented—and again here. One side of the tent is known as the Minnesota side, with five of us lined up together, Fritz, Tut, Don Smith, Happy Ahlers, and myself. Then Grant Willard is also with us. There are three New Yorkers, the Jacob brothers, Fraser and, yes, another, Bill Sloan, our French star, who insists that he cannot speak English and French in the same room. He thinks in French. He's a man of thirty, married, two children, a gentleman, an architect. Then there's eighteen-year-old Johnnie Taylor who's the happiest, gamiest little lad you ever saw. Ten of the men have gone on permission. We're hoping to get in on the next drawing but it's quite a problem with the three of us wanting to go

together. What a reception a returning *permissionaire* receives. He's forced to give a vivid account of all his civilized life, including of course all the good things he's had to eat, all the pretty girls that still exist—for we are quite sure that they still exist—what he's heard more directly from the States—are there many Americans in Paris—how is Paris—and so goes the questioning category. Then he always brings back cigarettes and photographs. I haven't had much luck with the latter but Fritz has some wonders. He's sent several home and if they arrived you must see them.

Our camp is a wonderful little spot, two tents in the orchard, then a rambling old French farm house, where the hay-lofts, chicken-yards, pig-stys, cow-barns, *et cetera*, are all mixed up in one grand estate under one roof. We have our dining-room in the hay-loft, a passage way between two towering piles of hay. On the top of the latter cluck numerous hens, laying numerous eggs which have been known to get to other than the owners' mouths. Three hens were holding a matinee and waltz on one of the tables yesterday as I went thru—but that's a detail. Breakfast's at eight. Some one goes for the pail of coffee—*au lait* now—bread and jam, and the rest of us are served in bed. Then there's the morning wash, at the picturesque pump on the roadside. About nine o'clock, letters, reading, etc., until eleven-thirty, luncheon. More of the same in the afternoon, bridge, a game of horseshoes, etc.,

until dinner time. After dinner we always make a pilgrimage to the village café *for* café. It's dark early now, at quarter of eight—we have a song, some chatter, and are in bed by nine or nine-thirty. It's been beautiful weather—not at all cold this last week—and thank you the moon has gone and the *avions* have ceased their first night visitations. They even bombed our own little village—five bombs in the center of the town, but no damage, as they all lit in the streets or fields. Tut and I saw the whole affair from a little knoll up behind the camp. It's fascinating to watch these midnight raids provided you have a safe place.

That's all this time—much love to each of you and my thoughts are with you. HENRY.

A CHANGE OF FRONT

September 17, 1917.

My dear Mother: Who do you suppose occupied this sunshiny room three years or more ago? And will they ever return? I doubt if they would want to could they see it now. But—in their haste to depart—there are left for our convenient use a little tabouret upon which I write and my clothes hang in a large mahogany wardrobe. There's another elegantly decorated black walnut one in the hall. Also there hang on the walls of this little bedroom large gaily colored pictures with a background of rose wall-paper. There are two huge mirrors, one in the door of the wardrobe and the other above the mantelpiece with a quaint old-gold frame. There still remain two little figures unbroken on the mantelpiece, a gilded figure of a Cupid and a white glass figure of the Virgin Mary, but her face is gone. Lace curtains hang over the casement windows which look out on a grassy orchard hill. Think of the homes like this in France where men like ourselves come now and without any asking for keys. A mere nod from the French officer gives us such a house for quarters.

There are no civilians at all in this little village. It's too near the lines and all is given up to the military. In fact, each house is numbered and a placard states so many *hommes* which of course means how many men it will shelter. The cellar of each house has its own individuality too, for at front and back there is an entrance – precisely like a bulkhead – and upon entering one finds a huge *abri*, merely the cellar reënforced with dirt and rocks, brick, etc., and here we'd go in case of shelling or bombardment by the *avions*.

We left L—— yesterday morning, coming directly here at S——, about five miles from the actual lines – so we are relatively about the same distance as we were in our camp at B—— next to the hospital. This little village lies not very far south of our former work but it's a much quieter sector – and it must be for we hear very few guns – and the boys who have been out to look over the roads say there is little doing. But nothing could be worse than the three weeks we had at V—— and as that was our baptism this work must no doubt seem tame.

The village lies nestled down between two hills covered with pines, and in fact beautiful woods cover all the hills. To think that it was the same beautiful country up above is almost incredible – for there has never been anything like so much fighting around here.

One steps from the rear doors of our house into what was a garden but down a little path

you come to a river winding thru the pine woods, then a gate in the wall. There are many paths, a modest house with terrace, with quite a lawn, and remnants of a garden. Many kinds of trees and shrubs are still beautiful, while a small lagoon with wicker bridges make it quite estately. It's truly very beautiful and much the best place I've seen since we left the mountains.

Our division "went in" yesterday and work commences today. Inasmuch as "Cupie," my aide, is in England and Tut Stair's aide is also on permission we have our cars alone. Hence, I'm going out with him tonight and he'll probably go out with me when it's my turn to go out.

It's interesting to be back at the front. Old friends turn up in the way of *brancardiers*, officers, cooks, and others. You see a division has some 15,000 men. At the front we're all together in a little "sector," but *en repos* we may be scattered thruout fifteen to twenty villages and we see only those in our own particular hamlet.

It was a beautiful ride up yesterday—leaving a little before noon—a clear sky, and the air so clear that one could see for miles from the tops of the hills. Woods are beginning to change yellow, apple trees are loaded with delicious fruit.

(An interruption here while I looked out of the window to watch the shrapnel breaking around a Boche *avion* who is flying a mile or

so overhead.) The *avions* were out in force last night, bombing apparently everything but this end of town. The building shook from the nearest explosions. We always seem to have some saving place. At B—— we were near the hospital. Here they've never shelled or bombed in three years they say.

I am wondering if Joe is at Andover by this time. I know how much you are all going to miss him. I'd give anything if "conscience" would let me come home and take his place as chauffeur at least.

Much love to you, Mother – don't worry – am in best of health and in good spirits. Love to all. HENRY.

Paris, September 23, 1917.

Dear Father and Mother: Sunday morning in Paris – you will be surprised to find me here. How quick the scene changes, for only yesterday morning we were listening to the din of guns at the front. It's been some time since we've had such a real civilized place to live in. Fritz, Tut, and I came here to the Sylvia Hotel – the same as last May. We have only two or three days to look up information and get a little respite from the life of "somewhere in France." Tomorrow and Tuesday we will be chasing up "dope" – today a real lazy loaf.

Hollis Cross is also with us and George Reed still at the hospital. All had dinner together last evening. I'm going to look up Sam

Sewall today. This isn't much of a letter, but time is precious here and I'll write as soon as we get back to the front. HENRY.

Winter hat, malted milk tablets, and Sister's scarf received. Thanks a heap.

September 29, 1917.

Ma chere Famille: It's good to be back at the front—strange as it may seem. When you're in the thick of things you are crazy to get out and would give your last cent to see civilization and yet four days of it was quite sufficient. It's somehow such a wonderful life here. It's worth in one day what weeks of ordinary life would be. I fear I shall be quite spoiled when we go back to our civilian duties. It will require some "will" to buckle down. But I wish, and do all of us, that we could get back, and that it were all over with. I wonder what you think of the length of the war. The French no longer even say. At the beginning it was three months—then another summer—then another winter—well surely it will be over by next summer—then a year—and now, "We do not know." Not even a guess will they hazard. Many have said that to me, while "Cupie," who has returned from England, says that opinion there runs to the end of the war coming next spring. I think next fall—four years—but who knows?

We had four days in Paris—one day in traveling each way—and you know what a vacation it was after four months away from

anything like it. I saw scarcely anyone that I knew outside of ambulance men as even Sam Sewall was out of the city. I expected to meet some one from home any minute, but no luck. Mrs. H. was also out of the city. We saw a good deal of George Reed, who is still in the hospital.

The recruiting officer has been here during our absence and six of the boys signed up (duration of the war); perhaps more will. At the present time Mr. Norton says we will be relieved within a month.

Paris was even gayer than last May and fully as beautiful too with the first touches of gold in the trees. Every day there seems like a holiday somehow—and of course it is, for practically every man in uniform is there for his permission. We *ate* decidedly well, I must say, and it did have an appealing lure. Had many good walks on the boulevards and drives in the Bois, shopping and visiting with other ambulance men whom we knew before at Sandricourt or elsewhere. Saw Lucius Thayer of Amherst, Lawrence Gregory, and many others.

But this is so utterly different. It seems like a dream. Just at present Fritz, Tut, and I are high on a wooded hill overlooking the little village nestled in the pine-covered hills, with woods all about us. The front is much the same, perfectly beautiful woods, and splendid roads. It's almost like driving in the "Bois." We only need two cars out a day and there are

very few calls. It's always been a very quiet sector except at the very beginning of the war, when there was terrific fighting at Les Eparges. Our rear line *postes de secours* lie in the beautiful woods. They are artistically designed woodland villages, a few *abris*, with little paths and gardens, rustic benches and summer houses. It's quite wonderful, and you can wander for hours in the woods, look at hidden batteries – and scarcely never a shell coming in. Yes, it's fine here – all except the *avions* with their midnight raids, and this great fine full moon is a joy to them. There's nothing worse than these air raids. Every one agrees they are worse than shelling, even the most violent up at Verdun, near our front *postes.* Of course the *avions* leave the front alone – it's the little villages they go after – and they surely can put fear into one. I've seen more of the night heavens in the last months than in all my life, and if one wanted to learn astronomy this would surely be a good occupation. But our *abris* are strong and we go in when the whir begins to get loud, and somehow they never come after midnight, so we get some sleep.

Weather continues to be splendid – no rain for two weeks – none while in Paris either – but nights are chilly – only I wish they would get cold enough to kill the flies which are perfectly terrible. Sleep in my clothes about half the time anyway – it's a good combination both for cold and *avions.*

To each one of you a great deal of love – and many thank-yous for the letters and packages.

HENRY.

4 October, 1917.

My dear Mother: There isn't a thrilling amount of news this time – but just a few commonplaces to say that the time is rushing on and everything well.

Mother, you'd never worry if you could see me now – it's the most regal and comfortable place imaginable; a great French estate on the banks of the sluggish Meuse. And here I am in a great wicker arm chair with one of those full extensions for feet and legs – what an uninteresting dry letter I'll be writing in such comfort. This is on an enormous terrace with a great stone balustrade, and beyond that is the lawn and the conventional chateau vista – a great distance thru the trees and to a little village beyond and then the hills. And here it is October and there are still beautiful flower beds – zinnias, asters, nasturtiums, quantities of marigolds, calendulas, detestable petunias, etc. Behind me towers the enormous mediæval chateau with its great turrets on each corner, its finely gabled roofs, all in stone you know, and on the other side a courtyard with a great gate between two big stone towers. It's all so much like the stories of mediæval France and such a fine building architecturally as compared with the modern chateaux I've seen. The grounds cover acres, woods

and fields, beautiful paths and lanes. Oh, where is the war!

Cupie and I are on duty for twenty-four hours here on what we call rear evacuation work. You see it's a hospital now but there are practically no cases at the present time and we haven't had a single run. There are three French ladies here, nurses; one is particularly striking walking yonder on the lawn in her white costume and a beautiful purple sweater. Last night, Cupie and I had a big white paneled room all to ourselves, regular beds with sheets, electric light, and a fireplace which we couldn't use—but I was tempted to try all of the twenty-odd beds.

What a month of beautiful weather was September, only three rainy days—always warm, though the nights are getting colder. I only put on the heavy "jeans" yesterday. The moon has been wonderful—the brightest I ever saw—and we've been thankful for a couple of cloudy nights and wind yesterday and the day before. We'll be thru with our work here before long now and no doubt have some days of *en repos*.

Had a splendid bunch of mail two days ago—ten letters—yours of the 5th, 8th, and 12th—two from Father and Joe—and one from Aunt Sue. I can never thank you enough for all your good letters—and always you are so good about having me over here. You're immense, Mother, about it all.

Did I tell you that last May Fritz and I left

a lot of our candy, nuts, etc., in our trunk expecting to get it soon when we came into Paris from Sandricourt? Well, we never had that chance, so we brought it out this time. Everything has kept splendidly and we've been enjoying Aunt Nell's wonderful box of assorted nuts, Missy's dates and cookies, and a lot of good things you put in. You see at S—— we have a room with fireplace. A group of us gather every night there, have a little feed, hot coffee cooked over the coals, toast and jam and songs. The same little "tent" group as a rule. It's great and the conversation is rare, ranging from the Arctic Circle to the South Sea Islands. Then usually there comes the slow droning hum and the Boche *avion* breaks up our happy party.

That's about all this time—not much of anything—but it's been sort of a good chat, dear Mother. Everyone keep well and happy—my love to you all and a very great share to you.

HENRY.

October 5, 1917.

My dear Father: It's a cold, nasty day, with the sun trying to shine. We moved our quarters a few days ago due to the fact that the Boche made it a little too lively for the inhabitants of the town, including ourselves. We rather regretted leaving our comfortable rooms with fireplaces and all that, especially in view of the place we are now. It's in the woods, and a good way from anything that

resembles civilization. In fact, we have to go three miles to get casks of water and no lights are allowed—absolutely. With its getting dark at six o'clock you see it makes a rather long night. You'd be interested to hear more of the place but it's *defendu* to say much. It would be rather lively I guess if the Boche discovered the place.

Had a long letter from Gerald yesterday. He tells me that Ted Cross has a second lieutenancy in the artillery and Dave Cutler the same commission in the infantry. Gerald was expecting a regular commission in the Navy very shortly.

Fritz had a Sunday *Journal* of the 9th in which we found many interesting items. Wonder if you noticed an account of a Boche air raid upon a French city, by a Mlle. Estang. The same air raid was one of the many at Barle-Duc which we heard while we were spending those days *en repos*. In fact, Fritz was down there that same night. This harvest moon has produced even more of it than last month. Coming back from Paris we spent the night in B——, and though it was a beautiful night, were fortunate to escape a raid. The next night was a terror there—about the worst raid ever conducted against a single city I guess. You sent me a clipping which spoke of an air raid on a hospital at Vandalaincourt. That's a place well known to us. In fact it was at that hospital that my magneto burned out which I wrote you about some six weeks ago.

It would mean a good deal to drop in on you and have an evening before the fire. But I'm not asking to come home yet. As I've said before, if there's work to be done I should rather be here than anywhere else. Did I tell you that the section carried over 3,000 wounded in our first action?

Would you notify the *New Republic* and the *Atlantic* of my new address—Morgan, Harjes Cie. It's time to eat now—nothing more than eating to live these days—but we'll be out of here soon and the cooks are under a good many disadvantages.

A great deal of love to you, Father.

HENRY.

October 11, 1917.

My dear Mother: We had been driving all day, rising in the early foggy dawn for packing and then a good one hundred twenty kilometres run to our present quarters of *en repos*; and it was after that long cold drive with nothing hot to eat since early morning coffee, arriving here after dark, that your letter of September 14th came and you know it was welcome. It's a week since I've written you and I'll have difficulty recalling the events. Our last quarters were in the town of S—— until we were shelled out of the place and then as I told Father we moved to the *poste* in the woods—four days of that—pulling out early Saturday morning, October 6th. Those last quarters were too close for com-

fort but the rain and cloudy skies kept us well covered and we escaped any excitement. But as lights were so absolutely out of the question there, no chance of a fire for warmth and the only water available at three miles distance, it wasn't far from life in the trenches. We didn't wash for the whole time and we turned in at seven o'clock every night from lack of anything else to do.

The division came out the day before us, and when they move of course we move too. This same division I haven't said much about except when we first joined them. It had a good reputation, one of the best in France, and is still more in renown after the successes of Verdun. The whole division wears the *fourragére*—the one regiment of infantry which did not have it when we joined having gained it during the Verdun attacks. The *fourragére* is a regimental, as the *croix du guerre* is an individual honor. It results in every member of the regiment wearing a red and green cord, with a brass ornament on the end, around the left shoulder. How different is the French military system from our own in these matters of "honors," dress, and customs. They still cling to a little of the ancient "glories" in their army—in fact all of the armies do save our own.

But to go on with the travels. We came south thru the valley of the Meuse, which, after the turning of the greens to brown is a very uninteresting place, over the well known

road to Bar-le-Duc – where we saw the results of that terrific bombardment by the *avions* which we missed by one night. It was always raining and bitterly cold and not a pleasure ride. Upon arrival here the quarters we expected to occupy were in flames because a *poilu* had inconsiderately dropped a cigarette in the hay and set the barn on fire. What a sight it was to see the fire brigade, about two hundred soldiers, lined up double between the village pump and the burning object. Down one line went the full pails, down the other the empties, and in between pails they were having one grand gossip and the fire blazed merrily on. We stood around for a couple of hours shivering, until finally we were admitted to the last available quarters in town – and that only by special dispensation because we were Americans and not real *poilus*. It proved to be a girls' school, a two-story affair, with an attic. We drew the attic and there we are, forty odd, all in one grand bedroom. Every three feet you have to duck a rafter, every foot there are wires for the purposes of drying "lingerie," a tile roof, one window, and about seventy-five other windows because the tiles don't quite fit. They also keep their winter supply of wood up there, all the cast-off furniture of the last thirty years and enough rubbish to show that the place was never inhabited by anything but rats. But we've spent five nights there and expect several more. We do have a comfortable place part of the time,

none other than the kindergarten which we are allowed the use of from eleven until one and after four in the afternoon. One small stove and forty men keep it comfortably warm. That's where I'm writing now.

A day goes about like this: Breakfast at eight, chop wood and work in the kitchen for a couple of hours, tinker on the car, lunch at eleven-thirty, more kitchen jobs, a walk or work on the car and it's supper time, which comes at five-thirty. It's dark at six now. They jumped the clock back an hour on us the other day. Don't know how long this vigorous life will last. Just at present Fritz and I are helping out in the kitchen which accounts for considerable of it. The evening goes by with a game of bridge.

Nine days straight of rain and chill. I think we're sewed into our clothes for the winter. We sleep with everything available.

In another month I'll be going thru the process of deciding my future all over again. How I wish the Boche would decide it for me by asking for peace. Mother, it's eleven-thirty, this room is getting cold, as the fire is out and the wood gone. What a strange life it is we lead here – rambling about – doesn't this letter sound it?

I hope so much that each one of the dear family is well and happy. My love to *tous les trois* and a *great* deal to you. HENRY.

Paris, October 27, 1917.

My dear Joe: Last wrote you from S——. About the next day after that letter things livened up considerably. I didn't write home just what happened but it had all the earmarks of a very lively Boche party. Whether the French had sent over an invitation for that day I don't know, but at any rate the Boche certainly came back with an R. S. V. P.

Fritz and yours truly were seated in the garden back of our house reading when it started – the bang of the Boche gun – the sharp whistle overhead and the crash in the other end of the city. Wheeler and Kingman immediately cease reading and arise, hardly believing that there was to be a bombardment of this village, hitherto unmolested except by air raids. But on these occasions precaution always rules supreme and we moved for some woods a hundred yards away and towards the hill to await developments. Things developed *tout de suite*, for another one came in on the hill opposite us and immediately we were climbing the hill where we finally landed and sat down to watch the party. It kept up – a shell coming in every two minutes and ten seconds, first in one end of the village, then the center, then our end, and always lighting within a few yards of the road. It being a one-street village, they usually hit a house. After every shell you would see about a hundred Frenchmen go tearing out of the village and up the hills like so many rats driven out by a

flood. By the whistle we could tell almost within fifty yards where the shell would light and then followed a great cloud of smoke, all kinds of debris would go sailing into the air, trees and everything else, while rocks would even come up near us though we were a good three hundred yards away. After an hour of this it ceased and we went back to look over the damage. We knew that three of the shells had landed very close to our house and all the rest of the boys had gone into the *abri* there. Within ten feet of where we had been sitting was next to the biggest shell crater we've seen. You could put our whole section in it and then two or three of the cars. It had uprooted a sixty-foot pine tree and thrown limbs clear over the house. It completely demolished our dining-room tables in the next yard and on the whole I was quite glad we had moved to the hill. Reading would have been difficult you know with a rough visitor like that. Another shell landed in the next garden and another totally destroyed the house across the way. The prospect of living in that village was not appetizing, hence we all moved that afternoon – not away, but up to one of our front line *postes* in the woods, a beautiful place but somewhat close to the lines – perhaps two kilometers. At any rate it was a rotten place, no water, no lights, cold and rainy, and we were ready to pull out when the order came four days later. We moved down near Nancy for a week's *en repos* and were re-

lieved by an American army unit two weeks ago today.

Since then I've been looking for a job in the army with the exception of a four days' trip I took to see Jimmie Hamilton. Am trying to land something in the artillery, though a commission looks like a mighty slim proposition and you'll probably next hear of your brother as a private "Somewhere in France."

Give my best to Walt and to you much love and good luck. Affectionately, HENRY.

CABLEGRAM

Paris, November 14, 1917.

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